

**Texas Hair Sheep Association
P.O. Box 245
Sterling City, TX 76951-0245**

October 5, 2005

Secretary Mike Johanns
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Johanns,

The sheep and wool industry in the United States has gone through many changes in the last few years. With the declining price of wool, the shift towards profitability in the sheep industry has moved toward raising lambs primarily for meat production. Changes in population, ethnic populations, ethnic holidays and eating habits have all had an effect on the demand for lamb in the U.S. market, and have increased the demand for hair sheep in the United States.

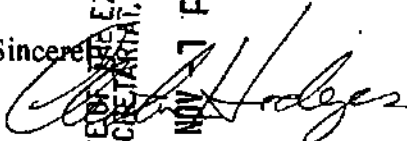
The Texas Hair Sheep Association (THSA) was formed in 2003 to develop and promote hair sheep as a profitable alternative to traditional wool sheep production. In the last two years the association has grown from 28 members to over 100 members from 39 counties in Texas and five states. THSA members have over 60,000 hair sheep. THSA is actively promoting production and marketing efforts of hair sheep to profitably sustain and grow the sheep industry in the United States.

THSA received a Value Added Producer Grant in 2003 of \$145,194 to research the quality of the meat and the hides. THSA recently received a 2005 Value Added Producer Grant for \$94,836 to develop a marketing plan for the meat and hides, and has recently formed a new cooperative, Lamb Marketing Specialties, as a for-profit entity to develop these markets and deliver additional profits to the member-producers. The support from the USDA grant programs and the Texas USDA state office has been invaluable in developing the meat and hide markets, and will allow our producer-members to realize additional profits of up to 10%-14%.

THSA was also awarded a \$24,714 grant in 2004 by the National Sheep Industry Improvement Center to further develop the hide market for hair sheep hides. Currently these hides are docked at slaughter, while the wool lamb pelts are given a slaughter credit. However, there is strong demand for hair sheep hides for products for the U.S. military, as well as many other markets that THSA has identified. With the funds from this grant and the Value-Added Producer Grant, the association is working to increase the value for the producer members of the cooperative and increase the value from \$5-\$12 per animal.

THSA requests the USDA to continue to support the sheep industry through these various grant programs, wool incentive programs, and the National Sheep Industry Improvement Center.

Sincerely,



Clinton Hodges President
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The Honorable Mike Johanns
Secretary of Agriculture
USDA
Washington, DC

Dear Mike,

As a wildlife biologist with Texas Prairie Rivers, located in the eastern panhandle region of Texas, I would like to express my thanks to comment on the upcoming 2007 Farm Bill. As a professional biologist for 26 years, I am committed to putting conservation on the ground for landowners here in a 15 county region. Our organization works with private landowners to encourage Eco-tourism and Conservation for farmers and ranchers in our region.

There are many facets being discussed in the upcoming Farm Bill, but I will only focus on two that the IAFWA working group has suggested in Texas. As an NGO that is working with many rural landowners and communities through grants we have been involved with several voluntary public recreational areas to encourage Eco-tourism in various regions. I would encourage you to support the concept to foster elements within the conservation title that would provide funding to NGO's in the "Open Fields" bill. This would allow dollars for operational costs, habitat work on land, and education of various NRCS/ FSA programs to be encouraged to landowners.

Second, I would encourage the 2007 Farm Bill to define a mechanism for exceeding the 25% county cap when conservation needs warrant an exemption (i.e., CREP, CCPR, WRP, and WREP). Many counties capped with CRP don't allow wildlife conservation opportunities with programs such as CP23-A, CP 29, and CP 33. Our region has a wonderful opportunity to incorporate these programs, but funding has been very limited or used up through other programs ranking higher in individual counties. Species such as the Lesser Prairie Chicken or the Bob White Quail are being left unprotected. Also Playa Lake habitats, and riparian ecosystems are not being adequately funded to control expanding invasive plant and shrub species.

Please consider these requests, as this is where the rubber meets the road in our and many regions of the Southern Great Plains for private landowners wanting to do good conservation on their land.

Sincerely,

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1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 1, 1861. It is a very important document, as it contains the President's message to the Congress at the beginning of his first term. The letter is written in a very formal and dignified style, and it is one of the most important documents in the history of the United States.

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